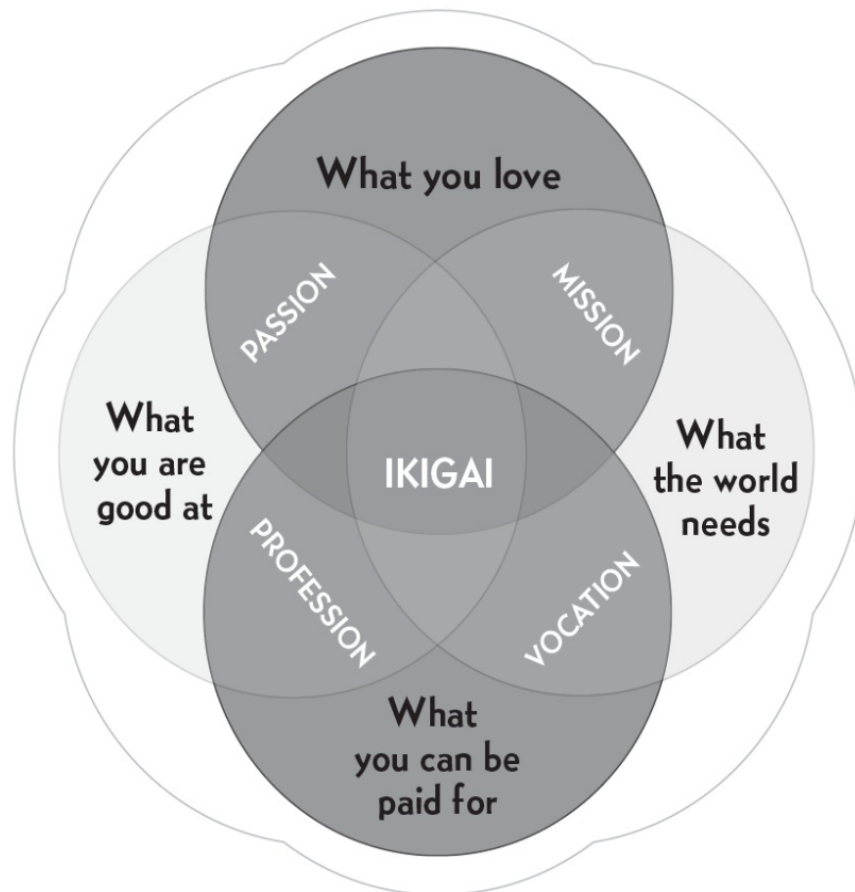


# **Ikigai**

## **1. The art of staying young while growing old.**



*Based on a diagram by Mark Winn*

- a. Whatever do don't retire!
- b. The 80 percent secret – fill your belly to 80 percent. (when start to fill full)
  - i. Presentation matter -japanese eat less by using small plates.
- c. Moai: Connected for life.

## **2. Antiaging Secrets.**

a. Active mind and youthful body.

- i. Presented with new information, the brain cells create new connections and is revitalized. That's why it is so important to expose yourself to change, even if stepping outside your comfort zone means felling a bit off anxiety.

b. Stress: Accused of killing longevity.

- i. The central premise of this stress-reduction method is focusing on the self: noticing our responses, even if they are conditioned by habit, in order to be fully conscious of them. In this way, we connect with the here and now and limit thoughts that tend to spiral out of control.
- ii. "We have to learn to turn off the autopilot that's steering us in an endless loop. We all know people who snack while talking on the phone or watching the news. You ask them if the omelet they just ate had onion in it, and they can't tell you,"
- iii. One way to reach a state of mindfulness is through meditation, which helps filter the information that reaches us from the outside world. It can also be achieved through breathing exercises, yoga, and body scans.
- iv. Achieving mindfulness involves a gradual process of training, but with a bit of practice we can learn to focus our mind completely, which reduces stress and helps us live longer.

c. A little stress good for you.

- i. people who maintained a low level of stress, who faced challenges and put their heart and soul into their work in order to succeed, lived longer than those who chose a more relaxed lifestyle and retired earlier.

d. A lot of sitting will age you.

- i. Spending too much time seated at work or at home not only reduces muscular and respiratory fitness but also increases appetite and curbs the desire to participate in activities.

- ii. Being sedentary can lead to hypertension, imbalanced eating, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and even certain kinds of cancer.
- iii. Recent studies have shown a connection between a lack of physical activity and the progressive distortion of telomeres in the immune system, which ages those cells and, in turn, the organism as a whole.
  - 1. Exercise
  - 2. Replace junk food with nutrient foods and fruits.
  - 3. Get the right amount of sleep. Seven to nine hours is good, but any more than that makes us lethargic.
  - 4. Play with children or pets, or join a sports team. This not only strengthens the body but also stimulates the mind and boosts self-esteem.
  - 5. Be conscious of your daily routine in order to detect harmful habits and replace them with more positive ones.

e. A model's best kept secret:

- i. Science has shown that sleep is a key antiaging tool, because when we sleep we generate melatonin, a hormone that occurs naturally in our bodies. The pineal gland produces it from the neurotransmitter serotonin according to our diurnal and nocturnal rhythms, and it plays a role in our sleep and waking cycles.
  - 1. A powerful antioxidant, melatonin helps us live longer, and also offers the following benefits:
    - a. It strengthens the immune system.
    - b. It contains an element that protects against cancer.
    - c. It promotes the natural production of insulin.

- d. It slows the onset of Alzheimer's disease.
    - e. It helps prevent osteoporosis and fight heart disease.
  - ii. For all these reasons, melatonin is a great ally in preserving youth. It should be noted, however, that melatonin production decreases after age thirty. We can compensate for this by:
    - 1. Eating a balanced diet and getting more calcium.
    - 2. Soaking up a moderate amount of sun each day.
    - 3. Getting enough sleep.
    - 4. Avoiding stress, alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine, all of which make it harder to get a good night's rest, depriving us of the melatonin we need.
- f. Antiaging attitude
  - i. The mind has tremendous power over the body and how quickly it ages. Most doctors agree that the secret to keeping the body young is keeping the mind active—a key element of ikigai—and in not caving in when we face difficulties throughout our lives.
  - ii. Those who face challenges with a positive outlook and are able to manage their emotions are already well on their way toward longevity.

### **3. From Logotherapy to Ikigai:**

- For the uninitiated, Logotherapy is the school of psychology that helps you find a reason to live. Our life's meaning isn't created, it's found.
- Shoma Morita, a Zen Buddhist therapist, created a purpose-centered therapy in Japan. His therapy focuses on teaching patients to accept their emotions without controlling them. The idea is that their feelings will change along with their actions.
- The basic principles of Morita therapy are:
  - **Accept your feelings:** don't change or get rid of them.

- **Do what you should be doing:** focus on the present moment.
- **Discover your life's purpose:** while we can't control our emotions, we can control our actions.
- Morita was a zen master of Naikan meditation which focuses on three questions:
  - What have I received from person X?
  - What have I given to person X?
  - What problems have I caused person X?
- These reflections increase our responsibility and make us realize we are the cause of our problems.

#### 4. **Find Flow In Everything You DO:**

- **Flow** refers to a state of complete immersion without thinking or being distracted. This happens when we lose track of time and we lose ourselves in an activity. In this state, there's no past or future, there's only present. When we flow, our mind is "in order".

The seven conditions to achieve flow are:

1. Knowing what to do
  2. Knowing how to do it
  3. Knowing how well you're doing
  4. Knowing where to go
  5. Perceiving significant challenges
  6. Perceiving significant skills
  7. Being free from distractions
- **Follow these strategies to achieve flow:**
    - **Strategy 1:** Choose a challenging task but one that isn't too difficult.
    - **Strategy 2:** Have clear, and concrete objectives.

- **Strategy 3:** Concentrate on a single task. Combining tasks doesn't save time, if anything it makes us less productive. When we multitask, we switch between activities. But to achieve flow, we must concentrate on one thing at a time. First, you have to be in a distraction-free environment and second, you must have control of what you're doing.
- To increase your chances of achieving a state of flow:
  - Don't look at screens for an hour when you wake up and an hour before going to bed
  - Turn off your phone or use the Do Not Disturb feature
  - Choose a day of the week to do a technological fasting
  - Go to places that don't have wifi
  - Use email once or twice a week
  - Use the Pomodoro technique
  - Start work sessions with rituals and end with a reward
  - Practice mindfulness or meditation, walk or swim
  - Work in distraction-free environments
  - Divide activities into small tasks and assign each group of tasks a time and a place
  - Bundle routine tasks
- To be happy, you can turn routine tasks (such as doing the laundry or mowing the lawn) into moments of *microflow*. These are routine activities that help you relax. Furthermore, rituals give us clear rules and objectives which make it easier to reach a state of flow. When engaged in a ritual, the outcome isn't important, the process is.

## **5. Mastery of Longevity:**

- a. Eat and sleep, you live a long time. You have to learn to relax.
- b. I have never eaten meat in my life.
- c. Everything's fine.
- d. If you keep your mind and body busy, you'll be around a long time.
- e. Never stop learning.

## 6. Lessons From Japan's Centenarians:

- Ogimi, a small town in Okinawa, is one of the five places where the oldest people live. Its residents eat a lot of organic food and take part in a lot of social activities.
- The secrets to longevity according to the interviews carried out in Ogimi are:
  - Don't worry
  - Cultivate good habits
  - Nurture your friendships every day
  - Live an unhurried life
  - Be optimistic
- Keys to the Ogimi lifestyle:
  - Keep a vegetable garden
  - Be surrounded by family members or neighbors you care about
  - Celebrate often
  - Have an ikigai, but don't take it too seriously
  - Be proud of your traditions
  - Be passionate about everything you do
  - Have a connection with others and help each other
  - Be busy

## 7. The Ikigai Diet:

Japan has the world's highest life expectancy, that's 85 years for men and 87.3 for women. The country also has the highest number of centenarians. On top of that, the province of Okinawa exceeds the average. Okinawa was the most affected area in World War II, but in a few decades, the province became one of the best places in terms of life expectancy. Some believe that this has to do with the fact that there are no trains, so people have to walk or cycle. Most believe it's due to Okinawa's "miracle diet".

- Okinawan residents:
  - Eat less than ten grams of salt per day
  - Consume a variety of foods, especially vegetables
  - Have five servings of fruits and vegetables per day
  - Eat grains
  - Rarely eat sugar
  - Have fish three times a week.
  
- As part of the Okinawan diet, its residents eat natural antioxidants on a regular basis. These include:
  - Tofu
  - Miso
  - Tuna
  - Carrots
  - Guya
  - Kombu
  - Cabbage
  - Nori
  - Onion
  - Soy sprouts
  - Hechima
  - Soybeans
  - Sweet potato
  - Peppers
  - Sanpin-cha

As a side note, green tea and most of its variants have many medicinal properties. It controls cholesterol, lowers blood sugar levels, improves circulation, protects against the flu, promotes bone health, and protects against UV.

- While most of the foods recommended in this chapter are not available in the West, you can look for alternatives.



They include:

- Vegetables like broccoli and chard
- Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna, and sardines
- Fruits such as citrus, strawberries, and apricots
- Berries such as blueberries or goji berries
- Dried fruits
- Grains such as oats and wheat
- Olive oil
- Red wine
- Foods to cut from your diet include refined sugar and grains, processed goods, prepared foods, and cow's milk and all its derivatives.

## 8. **Gentle Movement, Longer Life:**

- Exercise, Run, Skipping etc.

## 9. **Resilience and Wabi-Sabi:**

- Anyone with a defined ikigai has to pursue it no matter what.
- Resilience allows us to focus on the important things, ignoring all negative emotions.
- Both Buddhism and Stoicism place special attention on controlling pleasure, emotion, and desire.
- The Stoics practiced negative visualization, so they often asked themselves “What’s the worst that can happen?”
- Another principle of Stoicism involves identifying what we can control and what we can’t.
- For the Stoics, focusing on things outside of our control is meaningless.

- Both Buddhism and stoicism encouraged people to be in the present.
- Wabi-sabi is a Japanese concept that pays attention to the beauty of flawed and incomplete things because that's how the natural world is.
- A similar concept is that of ichi-go ichi-e which tells us that once a moment is gone, it'll never come again.
- Certain things become more powerful the more we harm them. Nassim Nicholas Taleb calls this concept antifragility.

### **To become antifragile:**

- Step 1: Create redundancies: to do this, have a second salary in case you lose your main job or have friends in case your marriage fails.
- Step 2: Be conservative in certain areas and take risks in others: when possible, take small risks that lead to big rewards.
- Step 3: Get rid of the things that make you fragile: remove the habits that make you vulnerable. Examples include snacking between meals, eating sweets, being in debt, spending time with toxic people, or doing things you don't like.

### **To sum up, here are the ten rules of ikigai:**

- Stay active
- Take it slow
- Don't fill your stomach
- Surround yourself with good friends
- Get in shape

- Smile
- Reconnect with nature
- Give thanks
- Live in the moment
- Follow your ikigai